

## Short Form of the 12-month Food Security Scale - Information

November 9, 1999

**BACKGROUND:** If respondent burden permits, the full 18-item scale is the recommended measure of food security, food insecurity, and hunger. However, for surveys that cannot implement that measure, this “Short Form” six-item scale provides a reasonably reliable substitute. It has been shown to have reasonably high specificity and sensitivity and minimal bias with respect to the 18-item measure. ***It does not, however, measure the more severe levels of food insecurity at which child hunger is generally observed, and cannot, therefore, identify households where child hunger is likely.***

**ITEM NUMBERS:** Item numbers in parentheses correspond to the numbers in the April 1995 CPS Food Security Supplement and the reports by Hamilton et al. about that survey.

**TRANSITION/LEADER:** If the placement of these items in your survey makes the transition/introductory sentence unnecessary, add the word “Now” to the beginning of question 1: “Now I’m going to read you....”

**FILL INSTRUCTIONS:** Select the appropriate fill from parenthetical choices depending on the number of persons and number of adults in the household.

### SCALING INSTRUCTIONS:

Items 1 and 2 are scored as affirmative if response is (1) Often true or (2) Sometimes true. They are scored as negative if response is (3) Never true.

Items 3, 5, and 6 are scored as affirmative if response is (1) Yes and negative if response is (2) No.

Item 4 is scored as affirmative if response is (1) Almost every month or (2) Some months but not every month. It is scored as negative if response is (3) Only 1 or 2 months or (X) Question not asked because of negative or missing response to question 3.

Households affirming zero or one item are classified as food secure. Households affirming 2, 3, or 4 items are classified as food insecure with no hunger evident. Households affirming 5 or 6 items are classified as food insecure with hunger evident.

One way in which to handle missing values (Don’t know or Refused) is as follows: If more than three items are missing, score the household as missing. Score other D and R responses as negatives. For another approach to scoring households with missing items see <http://www.econ.ag.gov/briefing/foodsecurity/core0699.pdf>

For an interval-level measure, use the following scores, based on the Rasch model:

| Number of affirmatives  | Score |
|-------------------------|-------|
|                         |       |
| 1                       | 2.86  |
| 2                       | 4.19  |
| 3                       | 5.27  |
| 4                       | 6.30  |
| 5                       | 7.54  |
| 6<br>(evaluated at 5.5) | 8.48  |

- No interval-level score is defined for households affirming no items. (They are food secure, but how much their food security differs from households that affirmed one item is not known.)

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## Short Form of the 12-month Food Security Scale - Questionnaire

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These next questions are about the food eaten in your household in the last 12 months and whether you were able to afford the food you need.

- 1 (54). I'm going to read you two statements that people have made about their food situation. Please tell me whether the statement was **OFTEN**, **SOMETIMES**, or **NEVER** true for (you/you or the other members of your household) in the last 12 months.

The first statement is, "The food that (I/we) bought just didn't last, and (I/we) didn't have money to get more." Was that often, sometimes, or never true for (you/your household) in the last 12 months?

- (1) Often true
- (2) Sometimes true
- (3) Never true
- (D, R)

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- 2 (55). "(I/we) couldn't afford to eat balanced meals." Was that often, sometimes, or never true for (you/your household) in the last 12 months?

- (1) Often true
- (2) Sometimes true
- (3) Never true
- (D, R)

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- 3 (24). In the last 12 months, since (date 12 months ago) did (you/you or other adults in your household) ever cut the size of your meals or skip meals because there wasn't enough money for food?

- (1) Yes
- (2) No (GO TO 5)
- (D, R) (GO TO 5)

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- 4 (25). **[Ask only if # 3 = YES]** How often did this happen---almost every month, some months but not every month, or in only 1 or 2 months?

- (1) Almost every month
- (2) Some months but not every month
- (3) Only 1 or 2 months
- (D, R)
- (X) Question not asked because of negative or missing response to question 3

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- 5 (32). In the last 12 months, did you ever eat less than you felt you should because there wasn't enough money to buy food?

- (1) Yes
- (2) No
- (D, R)

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- 6 (35). In the last 12 months, were you ever hungry but didn't eat because you couldn't afford enough food?

- (1) Yes
- (2) No
- (D, R)